

Teaching Reading for Comprehension in Secondary School

Pre-reading

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Final version

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Overview

In this document

This document outlines approaches to the effective teaching of reading for comprehension.

It is essential that children's comprehension continues to be developed at secondary school alongside the deeper reading skills, such as analysis.

This document focuses on the use of pre-reading approaches to develop comprehension.

What is comprehension?

There are many definitions of reading comprehension:

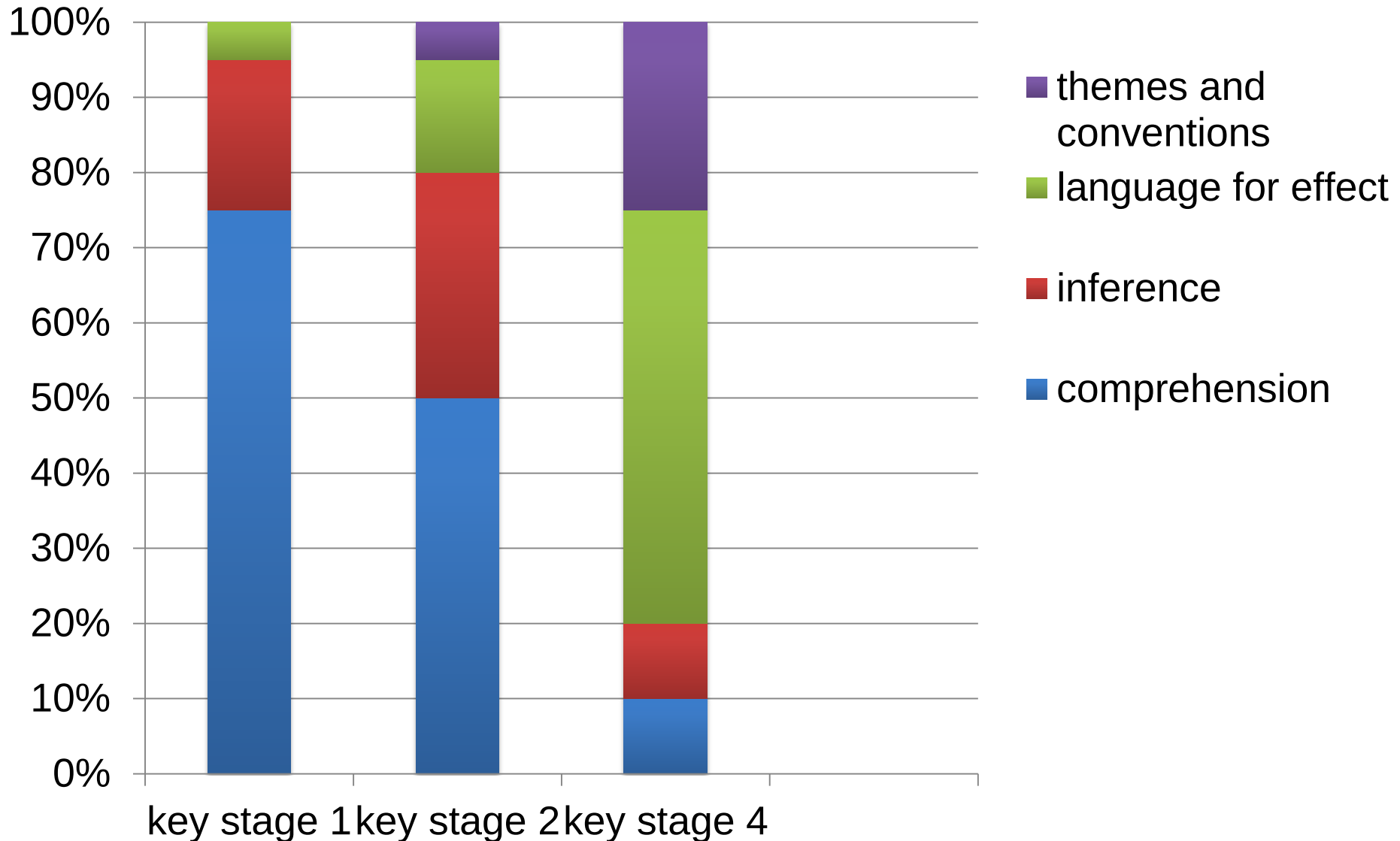
“Intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader.” (Durkin, 1993)

“The process undertaken by the reader as they attempt to establish meaning from written text.” (National Reading Panel, 2000)

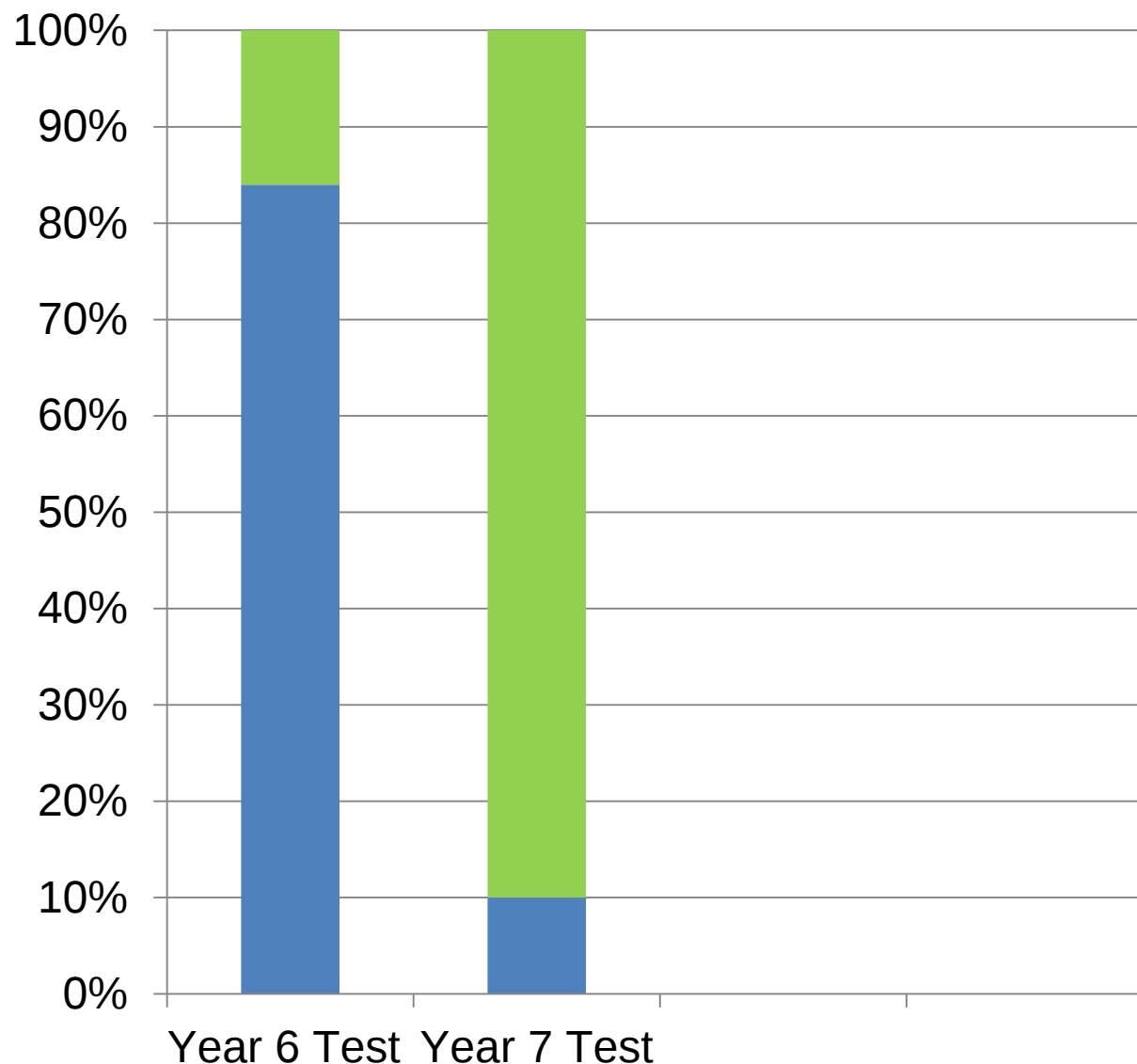
“The skill of reading to extract knowledge or reading with understanding.” (Moyle, 1972)

“A process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text.” (Pardo, 2004)

Shifts in Reading Assessment Focus



End KS2 vs Year 7 if using exam board KS3 papers

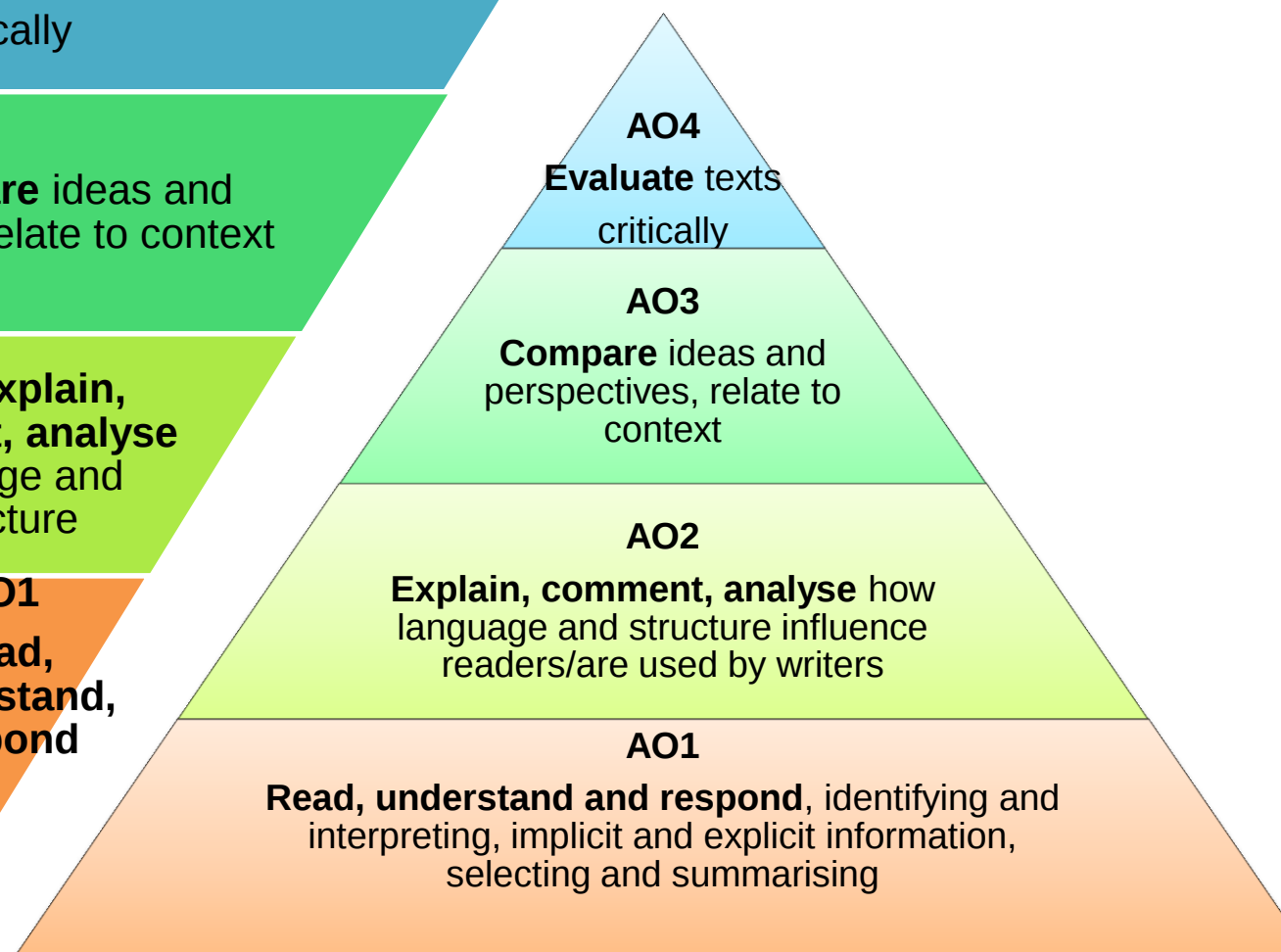
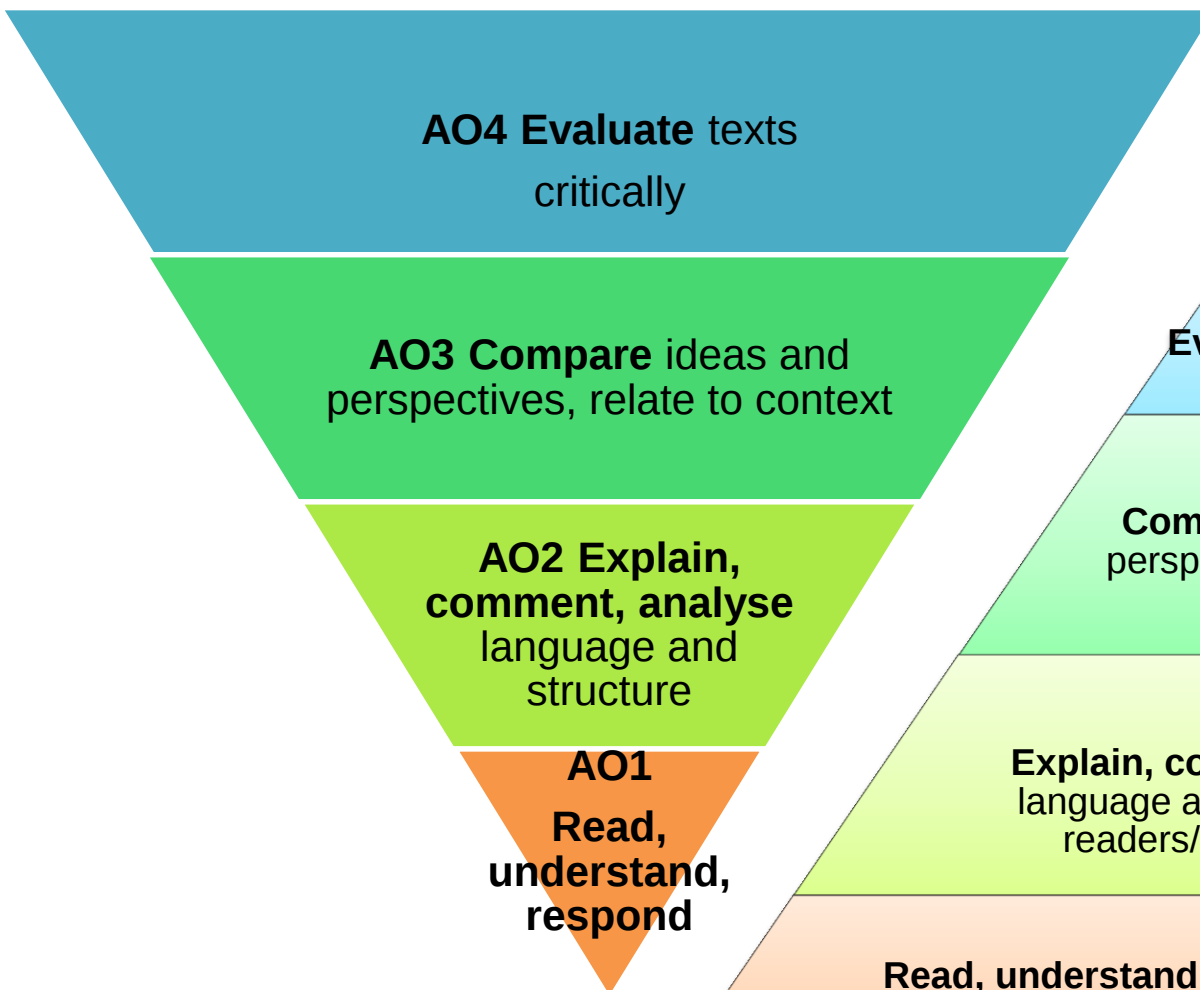


- KS2 – 8/50 Analysis (16%)
- Year 7 – 36/40 Analysis (90%)

■ Analysis
■ Comprehension

It is important not to jump to analysis too quickly, and to ensure that pupils still work on comprehension and understanding of texts first.

Balance of Marks Awarded



Hierarchy of Skill Development

How can we develop comprehension?

A range of approaches can foster effective comprehension:

- 1. Modelling of reading strategies and skills*
- 2. Pre-reading approaches*
- 3. Questioning using the three levels of comprehension*
- 4. Extending questioning into dialogic talk*
- 5. Using rich reading tasks*

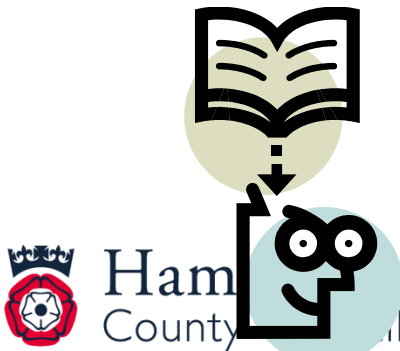
Create a clear learning sequence

Modelling of reading strategies and skills

Opportunities for pre-reading:
vocabulary, think aloud, building context

Learning:
questioning and rich dialogic talk leads to complex thinking

Outcome:
evidence of learning through rich tasks

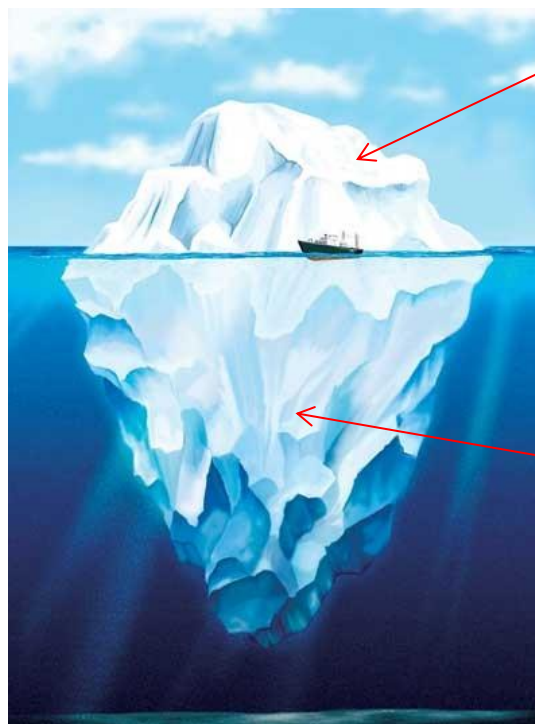


Provide opportunities for pre-reading

- Pre-reading opportunities allow children to explore text before studying it for deeper meanings.
- Pre-reading may involve work to familiarise pupils with the context of a text, teach key vocabulary or allow for independent exploration.
- These approaches should be used flexibly, as required.

Build vocabulary and contextual background knowledge

- Pre-reading tasks can enable us to 'level the playing field' for our less successful learners.
- The direct teaching of context and key vocabulary during pre-reading can improve comprehension.



What I can comprehend from the text

Contextual background knowledge and vocabulary

'In order to teach children how to understand what is written, we must teach them that taken-for-granted background knowledge' E.D. Hirsch (2006 p.122)



Build context and 'cultural capital' - every child's iceberg will be different...

What are the barriers to learning for **some** children ?

What life experiences do we assume they have had?

'Teaching content is teaching reading'

D. Willingham

How we use our contextual background knowledge to read

“Causal connections usually require world knowledge to bridge the meaning of two sentences.”

The pavement was still icy. Kayla told her children to be careful.

(Adapted from Willingham, *The Reading Mind*, 2017)

Even apparently simple texts require contextual background knowledge...

The pavement was still icy.

- People walk on pavements.
- Ice is slippery.
- People can fall when walking on slippery surfaces.
- People can be hurt if they fall.
- Parents don't want their children to be hurt.
- People are less likely to fall if they walk carefully.

Kayla told her children to be careful.

(Adapted from Willingham, *The Reading Mind*, 2017)

“The reason that writers omit information is plain. If they didn’t, simple communication would be terribly long and boring... Thus writers always omit a great deal of information needed to make sense of what they write... The reader must have the right information in memory to make inferences that bridge the meaning of what he reads. So what happens if the reader lacks that background knowledge? Obviously, he will have a hard time connecting the sentences, and may not do so at all – in short, the reader will be confused.”

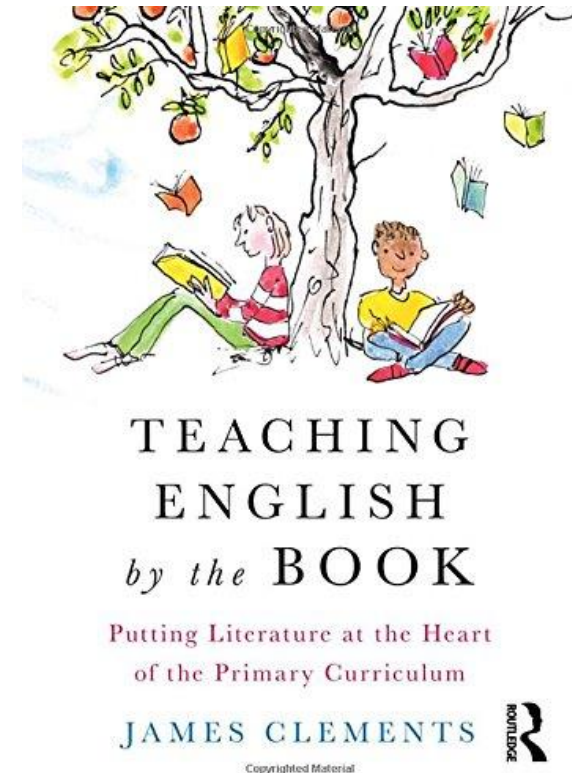
(Willingham, *The Reading Mind*, 2017)

Pre-reading approaches to build contextual background knowledge

- Use video, images and source material related to the context. For example, images of 1950s America and non-fiction articles about Italian immigration into New York, if studying 'A View from the Bridge'
- Provide wider reading materials and parallel texts – such as non-fiction and poetry to deepen understanding.
- Incorporate time to discuss and develop understanding of key themes before reading – e.g. if betrayal is a key theme, what does the word mean? What would betrayal in a modern context look like? Etc.

The importance of vocabulary knowledge

Children with a well-developed vocabulary are able to read more complex texts, which introduces them to new words, further enriching their vocabulary. This is often referred to as ‘the Matthew effect’: a term borrowed from sociology that is often succinctly paraphrased as ‘the rich get richer’.



(Clements, *Teaching English by the Book*, 2018)

Share key vocabulary first and encourage pupils to make connections and predictions

Bag of Words (nouns)

spirit fragrance wings
 lady days
lavender fruit it tree flowers
 it she
 maze
lady roses ghost leaves petals
grass bed moths spirit lawn
 dawn poppy bed
 mind valley
garden star moths repose

WHY?

**Modal
verbs**

The Adjectives

powdery

old

quiet

kind

dewy

flitting

morning

ripening

gentle

white

furtive

old

restless



WHY?



Modal
verbs

The verbs in order...

Pass

Fall

Sleeps

Creeps

Lived

Lingers

Sniffs

Seems

See



Weaves

Goes

Finds

Was

Was

Wanders

Rouses

Waits



A Garden at Night

James Reeves

On powdery wings the white moths pass,
And petals fall on the dewy grass;
Over the bed where the poppy sleeps
The furtive fragrance of lavender creeps.
Here lived an old lady in days long gone,
And the ghost of that lady lingers on.
She sniffs the roses, and seems to see
The ripening fruit on the orchard tree;
Like the scent of the flowers her spirit weaves
Its winding way through the maze of leaves;
Up and down like the moths it goes:
Never and never it finds repose.
Gentle she was, and quiet and kind,
But flitting and restless was her old mind.
So hither and thither across the lawn
Her spirit wanders, till the grey of dawn
Rouses the cock in the valley far,

Using a glossary to build and interact with new vocabulary.

Ask pupils to work together to speculate on meanings and make guesses before sharing answers

Word from article	What it means
Shock proposals	
In the wake of	
Falling standards in education	
Underachievement in the classroom	
Raising standards	
Necessary funding	
Teacher's Unions	
Operational	
Violate	
Deterrent	
Legal experts	
A swift conclusion	
Assaulting	
A consultation panel	

Annotation as pre-reading

Annotation for comprehension (or Think-Alouds) can be a great way of preparing pupils for deeper reading tasks, such as analysis.

Pupils can annotate the text using reading strategies such as:

- *questions for clarification*
- *predictions*
- *unfamiliar or interesting vocabulary*
- *visualised images*
- *text structure*
- *author's use of language*

Annotation example

Jo and the Package

Jo crept along to Grandma's room. It was in darkness. She edged the door open and peeped inside the empty room. On the bedside table stood the package, covered with strange stamps.

Jo held her breath and tiptoed to the table. The package was like a magnet. It seemed to draw her in. Her fingers itched. She just had to know what was inside. The paper at the edge of the packet was loose...

PREDICT
It will be about a present 

It should say pushed, edged doesn't make sense

Stamps are strange??
Why? 

I like cliff hangers 

PREDICT
It might be a Xmas present

PREDICT
Jo is going to open it 

why do we need to know this now?

peeped is a good word

PREDICT
Grandma will catch Jo! 

Thursday 20th October

Think Aloud in a Cloud

Who is 'I'?

'Snorting' she was out of breath

I like the word 'astonishment'

1900's

A baby?

Why is she running away from the train?

What is a Pale?

Intriguing

I shall never forget the first train that ran by. I was feeding quietly near the pales which separated the meadow from the railway, when I heard a strange sound at a distance, and before I knew whence it came - with a rush and a clatter, and a puffing out of smoke - a long black train of something flew by, and was gone almost before I could draw my breath. I turned, and galloped to the further side of the meadow as fast as I could go, and there I stood snorting with astonishment and fear.

Could be a bad memory

'whence' Not sure of the definition

It was going fast.

Wasn't familiar to the sound.

'Rush' and 'clatter' - good description

Predict - There was someone in the train she didn't want to see.

Narrator is a horse

Just position

"Puffing out of smoke" It was an old steam train.

2 commas

✓Excellent 'Think Aloud in a Cloud'!

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